



science for a changing world

<http://astrogeology.usgs.gov>

Orbit

0.38 astronomical units (AU) from the Sun
Earth is 1 AU from the Sun

Length of year

88 Earth days

Length of Day

59 Earth days

Tilt of Rotation Axis

0.01 degrees versus 23.5 degrees for Earth

Size

Diameter: 0.38 of Earth's diameter

Surface Gravity

0.38 of Earth's gravity
If you weigh 80 pounds on Earth, you would only weigh about 30 pounds on Mercury!

Mass

0.06 of Earth's mass

Surface Temperature

Mean temperature: 330 degrees Fahrenheit
Temperature extremes: -360°F (night) to 870°F (day)

Atmosphere

Extremely thin
Primary components: Oxygen, Sodium, Helium

Surface

Heavily cratered, like Earth's Moon

Moons

Mercury has no moons.

Past Missions

Mariner 10 (1974, 1975)

Current Missions

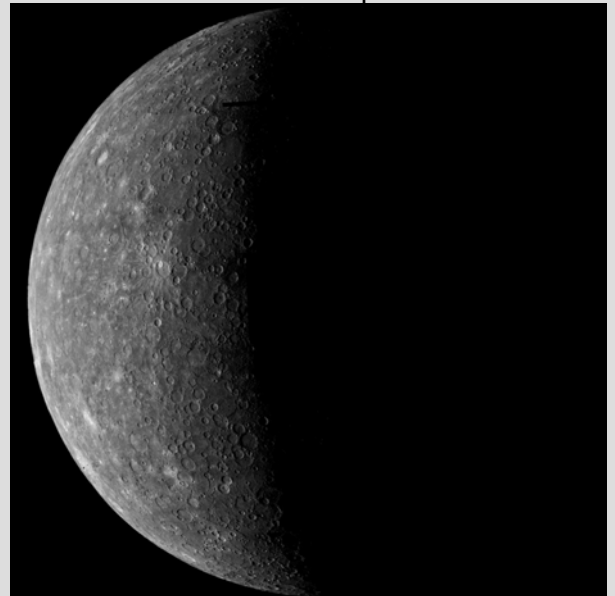
Messenger, launched August 2004, will arrive at Mercury in March 2011. The mission's goal is to answer a number of questions about Mercury's geology and structure and potentially provide insight into the development of the Solar System.

Future Missions

Bepi Columbo (ESA, launch 2012)

Mercury

First planet from the Sun



USGS/NASA PIA00437

The Romans called Mercury *Mercurius* because it appears to move so swiftly.

Mercury completes three full turns on its axis for every two orbits around the Sun.

Mercury was the messenger of the gods, who wore a winged cap and winged shoes.

Craters on Mercury are named after famous deceased artists, musicians, painters and authors.

Mercury is visible to the naked eye without the aid of a telescope. It is always close to the Sun in the sky, appearing as a morning star shortly before sunrise or an evening star shortly after sunset. Its motion against the field of background stars shows it to be a planet. The word "planet" is derived from a Greek word for "wanderer."